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Research and Reference Service

OVERSEAS REACTION TO THE CUBAN SITUATION
(As of 8 a.m., November 22, 1962)

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SUMMARY

Peaceful coexistence is the continuing theme of Soviet propaganda output on Thanksgiving Day.

The Russians are avoiding discussion of the role of the IL-28s. The bombers were mentioned in connection with the press conference, then forgotten. The theme now is that final settlement of the crisis depends entirely upon the fulfillment of America's "obligation" not to attack Cuba.

Cuba has not announced any official reaction to the lifting of the blockade. However, there are several propaganda lines, one stressing the need for guarantees against invasion of Cuba. Another picks up the President's reference to Cuban "subversion" in the Hemisphere and suggests the possibility of a "peaceful competition" on this score between Cuba and the United States.

Peking notes the President's "refusal" to guarantee against invasion of Cuba and underscores the U.S. demand for inspection and verification. A New China News Agency report on the press conference concludes with an observation that unless there is inspection the United States "would not hesitate to take unilateral action against Cuba."

Available West European editorial comment universally applauds the President's new success. There is praise for the calm factual statement which refrained from gloating over the victories. Several papers noted that problems remain to be settled on the questions of inspection and invasion. News coverage was extensive, and, in the main, observers were optimistic over future possibilities of negotiations between East and West.

SOVIET UNION

From "old Bolshevik" Kuusinen in Budapest came another Soviet elite reference to Khrushchev's "reasonable compromise" in the Cuban crisis. This fits in with follow-up propaganda to the Presidential press conference. Moscow is placing renewed emphasis on the USSR's "peaceful coexistence" policy which gave a new lease to world peace -- and to Cuba. At the same time, Soviet propagandists say once more that the final settlement of the crisis now depends entirely upon the fulfillment of America's "obligation" not to attack Cuba.

Current Issues

Soviet propaganda avoids almost completely any discussion of the IL-28 role in the latest negotiations over Cuba. Except for some early references to our reasons for lifting the naval quarantine, the Soviet planes might not have existed.

Apparently only Cuban audiences have been told so far about the President's concern over the identification of Soviet ground combat units in Cuba, almost as if Moscow wanted to show that it has not deserted the Cubans completely.

The general line that it was Soviet firmness and subsequent conciliation which saved Cuba from American "aggression" was unusually inverted in a broadcast to Brazil. The commentator said that "there is no doubt that it was precisely the Cuban people's decision to offer life-or-death resistance to the invasion threat that prevented the extremely bellicose circles of the U.S. from taking the final fatal step."

U.S. "Commitments"

By glossing over specific and direct Soviet military involvement in the Cuban crisis, Moscow returns to its argument that by removing those weapons offensive to us the Soviet side has kept its part of the

bargain. The Soviet Union does publicly admit that we have removed our naval quarantine, and TASS promptly carried the U.S. Defense Department announcement about the demobilization of air reservists.

Soviet spokesmen also insist that the President's "solemn assurances" that the U.S. would not attack Cuba must be turned into a firm commitment. An authoritative Izvestiya article even implies -- for the first time in the crisis -- that there should be a deadline of some sort for American adherence to its promises: "Delays in this respect are intolerable. Not months, not even weeks, but days should be the time limit for both sides. The Soviet Union is ready to accept this time limit and its hopes that the same readiness will be displayed by Washington."

Related Topics

Mikoyan's extended stay is still not discussed or interpreted by Moscow media. Except for a few generalities about Soviet moral support for Cuba, propagandists are silent about "whither Castro."

Since the President spoke, Moscow has sporadically attempted to interpret progress on Cuba as a good omen for future negotiations, though it has not been too specific about which issues should or could be tackled next.

CUBA

There has been no official Cuban reaction to the President's lifting of the blockade.

In the absence of official word, however, several propaganda lines are evident, one stressing the need for guarantees against U.S. invasion of Cuba and another, picking up the President's reference to Cuban "subversion" in the Hemisphere, suggesting the possibility of a "peaceful competition" on this score between Cuba and the United States.

A Cuban reaction to the press conference claims for Cuba the credit in releasing the bombers and thus destroying any U.S. pretext for evading "commitments" made by the United States. The Havana TV comment, however, stresses the question of guarantees against invasion, pointing out that this is a "two-edged statement," with Cuba having "every right to demand guarantees" on its part. The claim is repeated in other broadcasts.

This comment today and another broadcast yesterday over Havana radio in English single out the President's expressed concern over the threat of Cuban "subversion" in the Hemisphere. Today's broadcast explains the problem in the following words: "So it is true that the United States sees itself in what might be called a 'contest' with Cuba, a contest to win the minds and hearts of the Latin American people." The broadcast points to the peaceful nature of the Cuban example and suggests an American response: "There is a way, however, for Kennedy to take part in this contest. He too can stretch out a hand of friendship for the people of Latin America who are struggling for freedom. As a matter of fact, in a competition with the Cuban government on this matter, the United States, with its vast industrial power and resources, would be at a great advantage."

The Havana press is running behind events, perhaps still awaiting official word before editorializing on the President's lifting of the blockade. Yesterday's Havana press stresses the phrase "peace with dignity," without, however, giving an adequate definition beyond pointing to American threats, violation of the "rights of small nations" and similar vague formulations. A possibility that the "peace with dignity" slogan may include parts or all of Castro's previous "five points" is suggested in a letter sent yesterday from a Cuban official to the World Peace Council. The letter claims that "Cuba is not yielding a step in its support of the five points raised as a banner of dignity and of combat" by Castro.

LATIN AMERICA

The only comment reported from Latin America was from Panama where the national television station said the solution to the Cuban crisis was "the most significant and important international triumph obtained by the United States in the fields of diplomacy, politics and propaganda since the beginning of the Cold War."

Panama City radio warned that the "hour of danger" has not passed for nations of the Americas because "Fidel Castro continues his dictatorial rule" and his "legions of saboteurs and agents continue to conduct terrorist campaigns throughout the hemisphere." Now is the time to implement economic sanctions, the commentator said, because Castro "resembles a wounded animal that has been cornered, and we must be ready for his final charge."

The Agence France Presse came up with a story datelined Mexico City. The story, distributed to AFP clients in Latin America, said Castroite zealots are not pleased with the settlement, plan violent action. They are plotting to take possession of the anti-aircraft missile base at Santiago de Cuba and launch an attack against shipping or Guantanamo without the official approval of the Cuban government. The source of the story is supposed to be the Cuban Student Revolutionary Directorate with offices in Mexico.

WESTERN EUROPE

West European editorial comment, as yet limited, applauded the President's "new success" and praised his calm, factual statement which refrained from gloating over victory. Several papers pointed out, however, that there were still problems to be settled -- inspection, and a U.S. commitment not to invade Cuba. In the main, opinion was optimistic over future negotiations between East and West, with Kennedy and Khrushchev re-appraising each other. News coverage was extensive.

Available comment on the news conference was universally favorable, crediting the President with new success for obtaining his main objective -- Soviet military disengagement in the Western hemisphere. Satisfaction was general that he stated the facts of the latest agreement with Khrushchev without "yielding to the temptation to emphasize the extent of his victory." (Christian Democratic Il Popolo, Rome)

Tempering the general euphoria, however, were questions still to be settled, particularly that of neutral inspection of Cuba. Independent Le Monde, Paris, wondered whether Washington and Moscow had entered into a tacit agreement on air inspection as a substitute for on-site control. Liberal Dagens Nyheter, Stockholm, felt that as long as Castro refused to agree to neutral inspection, American public opinion would not be satisfied that offensive rockets had disappeared. The paper also declared that sooner or later "Kennedy will be confronted with the decisive question: at what level is he prepared to accept Cuban military strength?" The paper mentioned short distance rockets which could reach Guantanamo.

Several commentators pointed out as did France Soir, Paris, that the President had "left no doubt about his determination not to commit himself about invading Cuba as long as proper guarantees were lacking." Kennedy's stated determination to stop Cuban subversion in Latin America was also seen as a source of future tension.

On the whole, however, West European media were optimistic that in a mutual re-appraisal, the two K's would continue their "curious dialogue" (Le Monde) and a peaceful solution to the Cuban crisis would lead to the solution of other major problems. Moderate-left Combat, Paris, stated Khrushchev doubtless would understand that the Americans could "be pushed so far and no further, and it would be dangerous to mistake their patience and liking for comfort for weakness and softness."

The independent Verdens Gang, Oslo, suggested that Khrushchev's hard-bought knowledge of U.S. "will to resist" might have a "far reaching impact on his line of policy and on the international situation as a whole."

AFRICA

Two Nigerian newspapers carried long editorial features on the Cuban situation yesterday. The West African Pilot, Lagos, spread an article "Lesson from the Cuban Blockade" over 55 column inches.

The recapitulation concluded: "Now Americans can argue that their guarantee not to invade Cuba does not exclude waging of a national liberation struggle against Castro by Cubans (with American support) unless Khrushchev also explicitly disassociates himself from such undertakings elsewhere as, for instance, in Vietnam."

The Daily Telegraph, Lagos, devoted 40 column inches to an article headed "The Cuban Crisis as Seen by a Cuban, Mr. Javier Pazos." The point made is that Castro seems unhappy over the outcome of the crisis. Pazos was in The Sierra Maestra mountains as a staff officer under Che Guevara. Later he spent six months in a Batista prison. He is now at Cambridge.

The Tunisian Daily Es Sabah said the USSR, in conceding, was playing a "Russian trick" by which "world public opinion ... might be misled to believe that Kennedy's Government is guilty of warmongering. The trick will succeed, the paper said, "if America continues to believe that her firmness forced Russia to retreat... Wisdom and reason require America to show a genuine desire for peace proven by actions. Otherwise Russia will win the game."

NEAR EAST AND SOUTH ASIA

The Indian Express, Bombay, said the Cuba affair has proved one thing.... "that if it ever comes to the point of war, the Cubans will be on their own."

"In the last resort," the paper continues, "Mr. Khrushchev will not risk destroying Moscow to save Havana." The Express calls for a realistic outlook on the part of both Americans and Cubans. "The U.S. will have to learn to live with a Communist neighbor, and there are many Americans, though not the Administration, who regard this as an impossibility. Dr. Castro will have to learn that any attempt to export his revolution may indeed make it impossible."

The Tehran morning daily, Atesh, said the Cuban revolutionists "have caused the Kremlin diplomats to return to Stalinism." The paper said "Khrushchev's retreat from Cuba conforms with the Stalinist policy which was based on the two principles that no communist regime can be established firmly in any country to which the Red Army has no access, and assistance to any pro-communist nation must be withdrawn as soon as Soviet policy deems it advisable." Thus, the paper said, Khrushchev abandoned both Cuba and India when he chose to do so.

Scattered comment from Israeli and Iranian radio broadcasters indicated a belief that the crisis is practically over. An Israeli radio correspondent, however, speculated that the USSR may delay evacuation of the bombers in an effort to obtain concessions from the US. Another Israeli commentator pointed to the President's implication that reconnaissance flights would continue.

Earlier comment from Turkey said that Kennedy's non-invasion pledge strengthened Castro by enabling him to continue to export his revolution and strengthened Khrushchev by showing his war-minded colleagues the effectiveness of peaceful coexistence.

FAR EAST

The Australian press responded quickly to the news of the agreement to withdraw Soviet bombers from Cuba. Yesterday's Sydney Daily Mirror stressed the "victory for moderation" demonstrated by the settlement.

According to the paper, "President Kennedy showed almost politically suicidal moderation in his handling of the Cuban affair", especially in the face of the "near hysteria" of many Americans who were "even anxious" to go to war over Cuba. Referring to Khrushchev, the paper derogates the idea that Khrushchev retreated from weakness, claiming instead that his moderation was "an indication of his strength in resisting the warmongers in his own country, and not least, the warmongers in Peking...."

The Melbourne Times of yesterday (November 21) concluded that "the President's firmness has paid off at last" and the Canberra Times today hails the lifting of the American blockade as assurance for peace.

CHINA

Peking's first report of the President's press conference came in a cryptic November 21 domestic news service item highlighting the conclusion that "the United States will never give up its aim to overthrow the Cuban revolutionary power." Peking notes the President's "refusal" to make any guarantee against invasion of Cuba despite Soviet withdrawal of the missiles and the bombers. The lifting of the blockade is noted, however.

A later and more extensive review of the press conference was distributed internationally by the New China News Agency. It underscored the President's statement that there will be no peace in the Caribbean unless "the U.S. demand for inspection and verification in Cuba is fulfilled." The report concludes with the observation that until the "serious problems" concerning verification and reassurance are settled, the United States "would not hesitate to take unilateral action against Cuba."

There has been no editorial comment as yet.